

# The Boxing Biographies Newsletter

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[robert.snell1@ntlworld.com](mailto:robert.snell1@ntlworld.com)

This weeks Newsletter is devoted to the great Joe Choynski . The following articles are available in full on the web site along with much more on this remarkable man.

## **The Days of Finish Fights By Joe Choynski Story section Free press Winnipeg Saturday January 8,1927**

### **Finish Fight With Corbett Chapter 5**



After Corbett and I had fought four rounds at Fairfax the Sheriff ( who thought the contest was over) arrived and stopped the scrap. The contest had been fairly even, with, little harm, done to either.

A week later, by agreement we resumed fighting on a grain barge owned by Tom Williams, Corbett's wealthy backer, in the Straits of Carquinez; for twenty seven, rounds we fought with more ring craft than nine-tenths of present-day fighters possess. My seconds were Jack Dempsey (the original Nonpareil ) and Eddie Graney In Corbett's corner were Walter Watson and Billy Delaney.

It is my conviction, that Jack Dempsey was a liability rather than an asset to me and that if he had not been my chief adviser I would have won. For the first fifteen rounds he dinned into my ears the need of extreme caution. *"This fellow is clever,* he would say:

*"Keep away from him. Fight cautious "*.

Exactly the opposite style of fighting is what I should have adopted I believe I would have stopped Corbett in a few rounds had I used my own Instinct to keep on top of him and make it a slugging match. At the end of the fifteenth round Eddie Graney came out of his trance and



angrily shoved, Dempsey aside. *"To hell with caution. Joe!"* he bawled. In my ear. *"He's cutting you to pieces at long range. Go in and fight him!"*.

But by that time my eyes were almost closed from Corbett's jabs and I could scarcely see him. I was also terribly tired. However, I summoned my remaining strength and took the offensive. It was too late. During the last seven rounds both of us were at the point of exhaustion and alternately ready to drop. Victory hung delicately poised, but in the end Corbett's weight and science inclined the scales and I was the one to be counted out, one knee on the, ground and one hand, on the ropes. This was in the-twenty seventh round.

Corbett admits in his memoirs that he himself could have gone no further when. I collapsed. It was as even a contest as could be imagined. Corbett would never, meet me again, although I challenged him persistently. It will be seen from the facts set forth here that Corbett and I really had but one fight to a decision.

Think of a finish fight between men of our class with no **"gate!"**. It's enough to make publicity artists like Tex Rickard and artists like Jack Kearns call for the hemlock. I was twenty years old and weighed, 155(?) pounds; Corbett was twenty-two and outweighed me by fifteen pounds. The notion that Corbett could not hit effectively is erroneous While never a knock-down socker like Peter Maher, Sullivan or Fitzsimmons he had ample punishing power but his extreme caution kept him from using it to full advantage. He was unwilling to take the slightest chance in the ring, never tore in to kill or get killed.

It was this extreme caution that lost him, his fight With Fitzsimmons. Corbett was nervous and overwrought before that meeting his trainers tried in vain to divert his mind from the impending battle: Corbett entered the ring in stark dread of Fitz's deadly hitting. Fitz, on the other hand had no expectation of winning He did not believe he could beat Corbett, but he was doggedly determined to do his best, accept the breaks and being resigned to the worst remained calm and cool, with all his rugged strength unimpaired .

Corbett's blows, delivered always on the run, did not damage Fitz, and as Bob began to realize that Corbett was not hurting him he took heart and tore in. with cold fury, the result of which is ring history. Before passing, on from my recollections of the Corbett feud I wish say that I have no more bitter feelings. Time mellows us all The past is forgotten, and Corbett and I have been friends for years But I feel that: I am entitled to give my version of what occurred in the days when we were foes.



**15 January 1927**

**by Joe Choynski chapter 9**

***Stopped Owen Sullivan and Mick Dooley***



**OWEN SULLIVAN** was not only of gigantic proportions, but he was one of the clever boxers of the Larry Foley school. My friend who wagered I would stop Sullivan in four rounds was considered "balmy," and I confess I believed he had acted rashly. But I knocked Sullivan out in the first round with a punch to the ribs. He had to be carried from the ring and we were afraid he was going to die. It was a week before he could leave his bed.

Still believing I could beat Goddard, I asked for a return match, and the Barrier Champion consented. The second meeting was held at Melbourne and was almost a repetition of the first. Goddard again beat me in four rounds of desperate fighting. Again I came, against the referee's ruling prohibiting me from "striking" Goddard with my shoulders and elbows when his body collided with me as I ducked.

While it does not belong at this point to tell about it, I think it fair to record here that I met Goddard a third time, two years later at Philadelphia, with an American referee, and gave him a bad beating in six rounds! In that contest Goddard did not lay a glove on me. Despite my two defeats by Goddard the Australians rated me as a great fighter. In that country a defeated man is not thrown in the discards. I like several other characteristics of the Australians. For example, after I knocked out Owen Sullivan I went but to the race track the next day and was nearly floored when strangers would introduce themselves to me and tell me they won on me and offer to divide their winnings with me. Who ever heard of such a thing in America?.

Another delightful custom was the way they paid over the stakes. A banquet was held the day after the fight, to which the principals their seconds, managers and members of the press were invited. Complimentary things were said, and the fighters were given their money.

One day In Melbourne I was sitting In a popular oyster house conducted by Jack Warner, a well-to-do Australian sporting character. Suddenly I heard a fearful, uproar accompanied by a crash of broken glass. I looked around and saw a man riding through the front door on a horse. I was amazed to recognize the rider as Duncan Harrison, manager of John L. Sullivan, who was then touring Australia with his melodrama, "**Honest Hearts and Winning Hands.**"



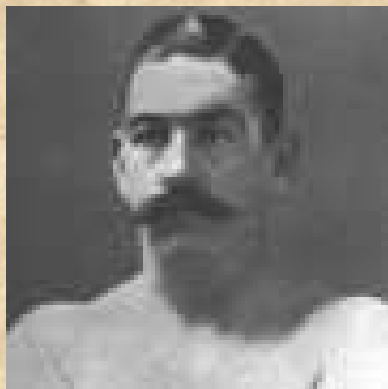
Harrison was arrested for drunkenness and fined the customary, Australian "**seven and six**," meaning 7 shillings, 6 pence, equivalent in American money to about \$1.85. The Sullivan show was a flop in Australia. The Australians are lovers of art and patrons of the drama, but the spectacles of Sullivan playing the role of a poor blacksmith whose family was threatened with eviction from home— Sullivan dressed in silk shirt, black velvet pants, silk hose and wearing big diamonds—was too much for their critical Judgment.

I was next matched with Mick Dooley; cleverest of all Larry Foley's pupils. Dooley had also fought Goddard' two hard fights, losing the last in 18 hard rounds. Dooley had also fought hard-battles with "Frank Slavin. then generally regarded as the equal of Goddard. Dooley weighed only 168 pounds, and was the first man of my own weight I had met.

But Dooley's wonderful skill was not much greater than my own by that time, for I had profited by my, study of the, boxing of Australians, adapting much of it. to my American knowledge. I knocked Dooley cold in the first Round. My last public appearance in Australia was in an exhibition bout with Steve O'Donnell, another remarkably clever boxer, 6 feet 2 inches tall; who afterward became Jim Corbett's sparring partner. Steve had every natural advantage except courage.

The next day I ran into John L. Sullivan on the street and he invited me into an ale house to have a drink. He told me was tired of the poor, patronage his show had attracted and suggested that, as I was about to return home, we book passage on the same ship. I readily agreed. Just before I departed for home after 14 months in Australia, a banquet was given for me at Melbourne, and I was presented by the sports of Melbourne with a silk purse containing-200 sovereigns.

### Meeting Samoan King and John L



JOHN L, SULLIVAN and I were together most of the time on our voyage home from Australia. He was an affable and interesting companion—-not at all surly and drunken brute which many picture him-.There were undoubtedly times, when the big fellow was in his cups, that he was ill tempered, but these occasions were rare. I found Sullivan very intelligent. And by the way I also found that he was a skillful boxer as well as a tremendous hitter.

John L. told me a. good story, on Larry Foley one day as we walked the deck linked arm in arm. Foley was unable to read or write although a. successful business man in Sydney. Some one offered to bet him a "quid" he could not learn to write his name in a fortnight. Foley accepted the wager and hired Jim Fogarty to teach him to write his name. Fogarty rehearsed Foley on. the .name "Tom Baker" by carefully showing him how to draw the letters as in print. When two weeks were up Foley met Corbett and; triumphantly



sneered: "Ha yer thought I couldn't do it, did. yer? I'll bloody well show -yer," and he proceeded to, print the letters "**T-O-M B-A-K-E-R**" before the astonished crowd.

The derisive laughter that followed amazed Foley. "*What's the matter*" he demanded. "Why *yer caun't write yer name,*" he was told "that; spells Tom Baker. Foley made a dash out of the place and hunted until he found Fogarty in another pub. He proceeded to denounce the "jawbreaker" for a fraud and demanded a return of his money. But Fogarty, unsmilingly, insisted that the name Foley had scrawled was Foley's own. Larry then ran back to his own place angrier than ever and offered to lick the whole crowd unless the wager was paid, over at once. It required several hours to straighten him out on the puzzle and he did not speak to Fogarty for months after.

When we arrived at the Samoan Islands King Mateefa, who had learned that we American fighters were on the ship, sent us an invitation to visit him. The king was a magnificent physical specimen, six feet four inches tall, weighing 300 pounds and a perfectly proportioned athlete. He was almost nude and tattooed from waist to head. Mateefa, however was a university-trained man, and spoke English perfectly. As he shook hands with Sullivan, he remarked with a laugh, "Why, you are not such a big man; I would not be afraid to fight you myself."

Arriving home from Australia I was offered a finish fight at San Francisco with Billy Woods, from Denver, a Scotch heavyweight, 6 feet 1 inch tall, and a well built athlete. In the first session Woods floored me. I got up and floored him. The gong rang, -with Woods taking the count." Afterward I learned that many late arrivals in the audience came in while Woods, was on the floor in the first round. On learning that Choynski had knocked his opponent, down in the first round for the count they turned round, and went home, thinking the fight was over.

But that fight went thirty-four rounds-before I got Woods on the floor to stay. Con Mooney, dog fighter and rat killer, a picturesque character and a pal of Bat Masterson sat at the ringside plugging lustily for Woods. He kept yelling that I had weak legs and. For Woods to stay away and tire me out.



